

Staunton Public Library
LIBRARY ADVISORY BOARD MEETING NOTES

February 16, 2023

Call to Order, Attendance, and Recognition of Quorum

The meeting, held at Staunton Public Library, was called to order at 4:32pm by Randolph Bertin.

Board Members Present

- Randolph Bertin
- Rebecca Cochran
- Cass Cannon
- Jason Clarke
- Virginia Trovato

Others Present

- Library Director Sarah Skrobis
- City Council Member Michele Edwards
- Friends of the Library representative and President Howard Kator

Not present: Mark Peterson

A Quorum was present.

Approval of Minutes

Randolph made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 19, 2023 Meeting, which was seconded. Minutes were approved.

Reports

Friends of the Library Report

Howard provided an updated from the Friends, highlighting the following items:

- Friends spent a long time going through the budget line by line. There is an increase for speakers and musicians.
- They recently began discussions of the annual book sale about whether one singular book sale is necessary. There may be a move to change the way this is held.
- AmazonSmile is no more.
- The finalized budget should be available at their next meeting.
- Gifts Policy was formally adopted.

- There has been a discussion about fundraising for the Library. An Ad Hoc committee convened to share ideas with three main ones emerging: art auction, sponsorship for musical events, and developing an annual campaign.
- The paper newsletter will be eliminated completely (digital only going forward after a to-be-determined date).

Talking Book Center Report

Virginia presented an update on the TBC, highlighting the following items:

- There is a new video that is a PSA for the TBC for use on social media and other websites, social events, etc. It is oriented at spreading the word and hopefully gaining additional patrons.
- Budgets and fundraising are big right now and there will be more going on soon.
- A press release was sent out and aired on local news about the new Braille readers.
- They are hoping to do a fundraising, raffle, or something akin to that in the Spring to raise more money.

Library Director's Report

Sarah gave the following highlights in her report:

- There have been two more vacancies since last month. That makes 12 this fiscal year. They are posted right now and hopefully will be filled soon.
- The library has submitted a request for a grant from the Community Foundation of the Blue Ridge for a StoryWalk at Montgomery Hall Park.
- Building issues continue. The men's toilet got clogged with lottery tickets. It has been fixed, but demonstrates the ongoing issues that the building encounters.
- Sarah suspects mold on the ground floor underneath a leaky window sill. Public Works has been notified, but they have not been to the library to inspect. There was concern expressed by all about the lack of expediency put upon such a pressing issue.
- IT came and installed the rest of the new computers that were purchased last year.
- The library is still planning programs and fun events for the public.
- The Virginia Festival of the Book will be hosting an event here on March 16. Author Jason Wright will be guest speaker. They will also be hosting an event in the fall here. This is very exciting and quite an honor.
- They are working with a vendor right now to use some Friends funds for new furniture for the teen room.

United for Libraries Report

Randolph presented highlights from his conference attendance. This month's update was on Fundraising with these highlights:

- In general, fundraising comes from: 67% from individual donations, 19% from foundations, 10% from bequests, and 4% from corporations.
- Bequests: 2 out of 3 adult Americans do not have a will. Legacies are useful ways to get additional funds, regardless of a person's financial background. It's a good idea for a library to have specific plans for a dedicated bequest. Freewill.com is a useful place and should be investigated as a way to make it easy for an individual to create a bequest. This is something that has been mentioned before, and should be investigated by the library.
- Annual Fund Drive: Strongly encourage software tools to maintain donor information, track giving, etc. Donorperfect is a good software to use. Regular users of the library are the most likely population to donate. Appeals should be simple so that a third-grader can understand. Tell a powerful story and include an Ask. Photos are good marketing. Remember to thank any and all donors, and include a donor appreciation event. Provide regular communication. You have to spend money to get money.
- Political Advocacy: Public funding. Elected officials champion libraries but only fund when there is a demonstrated need. There's a lot of competition so it's very important to show why libraries are integral. Donors are more likely to contribute when it is known that the local government is also supportive. It is recommended to have an Advocacy Committee as it is a year-round job.

Old Business

City Capital Improvements Plan (CIP)

Space study

- This is still in the draft CIP.
- Sarah expressed concern that even if this gets approved, and we complete the study, it may never go anywhere beyond that. This is what happened in the last study. There was discussion around this concern. Highlights include:
 - Randolph mentioned that the space study will also help us find better ways of configuring the space for flexibility. He believes it is still worth doing.
 - Jason commented that we have limited control, but we should still provide the data and research.
 - Virginia mentioned that there we should have a plan b,c,d, so that we can eventually get things done.
 - Cass says that advocacy looks forward, not backward. We should look ahead, not at what has happened in the past. She thinks the public will get excited and everyone will say 'yes' to our plans.

- Michelle brought up that the City Council right now is being very responsive to the public. And while there may be less money, when people attend meetings, it is effective and the Council is more likely to listen. Library champions are imperative.
- It is important to have a demonstrated need for improvements.
- Community needs to own the plan.
- Fundraising with matching funds is a potential way to get the money needed if the City isn't able to provide it. Jason thinks this conversation should be started (after the plan gets approved).

Roof replacement

- ARPA fund is basically approved - just awaiting final word.
- Review of current roof materials has begun (asbestos search).

Budget Process Update

- The City is still working on the City Manager's Budget to be proposed in March. It seems as though the budget will be quite tight this year.
- There will be 6 different versions of the budget that will be discussed and voted on.
- Cuts are expected out of the Library budget.
- There is a danger of losing our state aid if we are told to cut certain amounts of City funding from the library budget. The Library of Virginia has strict rules regarding expenditures and requirements.

New Business

- It was unanimously agreed upon that subsequent meetings shall begin with an appropriate joke relevant to the current agenda and/or libraries in general.
- The Bills from the General Assembly regarding library bans and censorship have been shelved for the time being, so we have a reprieve on these.

Public Comment Period

- No community members were present.

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 5:54pm

Respectfully submitted, Rebecca Cochran